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ABSTRACT

Resources available to Arizona through the School-to-Work Opportunities Act will not be concentrated in rural communities, although their educational and economic development needs are proportionately greater. Absent from education reform bills pending in the Arizona House and Senate is any reference to school-to-work transition or any explicit recognition of the need to prepare Arizona's work force. Arizona has established a long-range plan for economic growth and development--the Arizona Strategic Plan for Economic development (ASPED). Although educational reform policy neglects school-to-work issues, economic development policy represented by ASPED does refer to improving school-to-work transitions through expanded cooperative education and/or linkages. In terms of school reform, for a majority of rural Arizonans, there is no choice of school, and open enrollment and vouchers are virtually meaningless. Little more than lip service is paid to rural economic development issues. A fundamental dilemma for school-to-work transition efforts in rural areas is the lack of job opportunities for a work-based component. What is fundamentally disturbing about the omission of rural concerns in state policymaking is that Arizona's public policy fails to promote social equality and thereby contributes to the perpetuation of a rural underclass. State policymakers should develop a coherent strategy to address rural issues and the rural-urban dichotomy. (Contains 25 references.) (YLB)

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TENSIONS BETWEEN POLICY AND WORKPLACE OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL ARIZONA:

DOES PUBLIC POLICY IGNORE SOCIAL EQUALITY?

by

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Introduction

With the impending passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act by the 103rd Congress, more than one billion dollars over the next three years will be available for states to plan and implement school-to-work transition programs. Arizona policymakers already have cornered a share of the school-to-work market, having receiving one-quarter million to plan a statewide school-to-work transition *system* for better linking young workers with employers.

The research on which this paper tries to elucidate some of the policy implications of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in Arizona (henceforth, the Act). The research is timely as the state moves forward in developing its school-to-work transition plan.
In an earlier version of this paper, the authors envisioned a set of circumstances and policy recommendations for implementing quality school-to-work programs in rural areas. An assumption inherent in our earlier work was that emerging state policy regarding school-to-work transition *would* encompass rural issues. This paper revisits the validity of this assumption, given additional reflection and exploration of the thrust of current policy actions in Arizona.

As defined in this paper, school reform and economic development initiatives form the context for school-to-work policy. And while Arizona is actively pursuing a school reform agenda, this agenda: 1) does not include school-to-work, or the broader notion of workforce preparation, in its reform equation and 2) holds little promise for meaningful reform in rural areas. Furthermore, while Arizona has developed a renowned economic development strategic plan and is pursuing its implementation, linking economic development

with school reform is *not* on the forefront of the policymaking agenda. In addition, very little "real" attention is being focused on rural problems and solutions.

A pilot study with a select group of Arizonans clearly spells out the reasons for slighting rural concerns. Simply put, as long as "all politics is local" (a statement attributed to Tip O'Neill), state policy will *never* fully accommodate rural needs. In Arizona, local politics essentially refers to urban politics. The political reality of the decision-making process in Arizona is population-based and therefore favors the state's 75 percent urban dwellers.

Our contention is that resources available to Arizona through the School-to-Work Opportunities Act will *not* be concentrated in rural communities, despite the fact that the educational and economic development needs are proportionately greater in Arizona's rural areas than in urban areas. Thus, although the Act has the potential to serve as a catalyst for meaningful reform and action in rural areas, the extent to which these areas will benefit from school-to-work initiatives is questionable. Both the nature and demographics of rural Arizona lead us to the conclusion that while the state's public policy may not intentionally promote social *in*equality, it certainly fails to promote social equality. In so doing, Arizona public policy maintains an environment conducive to social Darwinism whereby only the fittest of rural communities will survive.

A Methodological Symbiosis

This study was prompted in large measure by both authors' previous research. During 1992, Danzig conducted research with 33 rural employers who discussed their experiences

with newly hired employees (i.e., recently left or graduated from high school). Structured interviews were conducted by telephone, audiotaped, and transcribed. Danzig's research resulted in the paper *School-To-Work Transition: Employer Attitudes Toward Employees, Jobs, and the Workplace in Rural Arizona* (Danzig, 1992).

Also during 1992, Vandegrift participated as a member of an interagency "Arizona School-to-Work Transition Team" funded by the Council of Chief School State Officers (CCSSO) to receive training and develop the rudiments of a state vision for a school-to-work transition plan. The team, including representatives from the Arizona Departments of Education and Economic Security, ultimately developed a policy position paper, *An Arizona Initiative for School-to-Work Transition* (Vandegrift, 1992).

Combining practical and policy perspectives, the authors developed a joint interest in the emergence of state school-to-work policy as it affects rural areas. Pursuing this interest, an exploratory study was conducted with a select group of Arizona policymakers and experts. Structured interviews regarding school-to-work transition issues, school reform, and economic development were conducted with the Executive Director of the Arizona Employment and Training Council; the State Director of Vocational-Technological Education (currently employed in the private-sector as a director of education and training); the Executive Director of the Arizona School-to-Work Partnership Program (and former state legislator); and the Director of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy (and former Vice President of Hudson Institute and creator of the Institute's Center for Education and Employment Policy).

These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed in fall 1993. Numerous informal follow-up conversations have been held with additional local and national policymakers and analysts, including members of the state's planning team for school-to-work transition and participants involved in the creation and implementation of Arizona's Strategic Plan for Economic Development. For the purposes of this paper, persons formally interviewed are designated as interviewees; others are noted as consultants. Throughout this investigation, the authors have drawn extensively on supplementary literature as it pertains to this exploratory policy analysis.

Linking School Reform and Economic Development

This paper begins by summarizing Arizona's school reform and economic development initiatives with the intent to delineate the existing context for emergent school-to-work policy. The following sections briefly outline the federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act and state school reform and economic development initiatives. The section concludes with by illustrating Arizonans' perceptions of how school-to-work fits in to these policy contexts -- or in this case, does not fit.

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act adopts the position that linkages are essential between school reform and efforts to revitalize our nation's economic competitiveness worldwide. Supporting this platform is a growing body of literature citing entry-level workers' lack of and need for basic skills and job preparation (American Management Association, 1993; Murnane, Willet & Levy, 1992). Many assert that it is the primary responsibility of the schools to prepare young people not only academically but vocationally

as well, including training in employability skills (e.g., how to get and keep a job) and specific occupational skills (Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Ganzglass, 1992). Although the arguments underlying this platform are subject to debate (Berliner, 1992), they are clearly driving the school-to-work movement.

Both the House and Senate versions of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act emphasize three components. First, there is a school-based component that seeks to strengthen the public high school curriculum to better prepare young people for work. Second, both versions require work-based experiences that are linked with school-based efforts. Third, both seek to ensure that there are support services for young people which better "connect" schools and workplaces (cf. *Phi Delta Kappa Legislative Newsletter*, September 1993; Olson, 1994).

School Reform in Arizona

In the Arizona House and Senate, education reform bills are currently pending. Elements in common are most notably propositions that support decentralization, open enrollment (i.e., parental choice), and the creation of Charter Schools. Other provisions in common address increased parental involvement, eliminating the need for parent approval to place students in alternative programs, and greater school accountability for student achievement. The most contentious proposition, and where the House and Senate bills differ, concerns parent vouchers. The House bill initially would provide 2000 low-income applicants with grants up to $1500 toward tuition at any public or private institution. Absent from either education reform bill is any reference to school-to-work transition or any explicit recognition of the need to better prepare Arizona's workforce.

Economic Development in Arizona

Given that workforce preparation is not in the forefront of education policymaking, attention turns to the economic development arena. Arizona *does* enjoy an advantage over many states in having established a long-range plan for economic growth and development dubbed ASPED -- the Arizona Strategic Plan for Economic Development. Since 1990, over 4000 business representatives, educators, government employees and private citizens helped create multiple strategies designed "to increase the standard of living and enhance opportunities for advancement by increasing per capita real wages, creating quality jobs, fostering enterprise, and improving the quality of life" (Carlile, 1994; *Creating a 21st Century Economy*, 1991).

The Arizona Strategic Plan for Economic Development (ASPED) has launched a reconfiguration of Arizona business-industry into economic "clusters" which are bolstered by "foundations." ASPED's foundations for economic growth include quality human resources, accessible technology, capital availability, advanced physical and information infrastructure, a stable tax and regulatory environment, and a high quality of life for Arizonans. At least in theory, ASPED views the connection between education and economic development an important means of developing *quality human resources* -- one of the essential foundations for economic development.

The plan is being implemented by the Governor's Strategic Partnership for Economic Development (GSPED) -- a bipartisan group whose membership includes top industry executives, organized labor, Arizona's Native Americans, minority businesses, community colleges, private and public universities and the Arizona Department of Commerce.

Where do School-to-Work Initiatives Fit?

In our pilot study, Arizona policymakers and analysts were asked their views on how school-to-work transition links with state school reform and economic development initiatives. With respect to school reform, one interviewee noted:

> "In many states, a big part of their school reform is [school-to-work transition]. In our state, and this is something I feel strongly about, we've taken the notion of decentralization and choice as a primary component and I would say that hasn't a tinker's darn to do with reforming education....I don't think that on anybody's lips [in Arizona] is any of this issue [of school-to-work] in terms of meaningful school reform....the school reform issue is moving ahead and [the question is:] 'How do we get some of those people to understand, or even listen, that this needs to be part of that discussion?' And, it hasn't been."

Or, in the words of another:

> "Certainly school-to-work has not been mentioned as *any* aspect of any of the school reform revisions that I've seen....*If* it's being talked about, I'm not aware of it....Across the country, many other states are going to their legislatures and getting money for this. But [in Arizona], it's not impossible, but I just don't see it on the horizon right away."

Where educational reform policy omits school-to-work issues, economic development policy represented by ASPED *does* refer to improving school-to-work transitions through expanded cooperative education and/or linkages. However, asked if ASPED/GSPED adequately accounts for school-to-work transition, interviewees offered these observations:

> "The silence has been deafening on all of the ASPED discussions. I mean, if there are two words on young people, they may be in there. But it's not much, is there?....My impression is it does *not* adequately address school-to-work."

> "ASPED does not adequately account [for school-to-work] but what it *does* is that it recognizes -- more in subtle ways -- the most serious foundation [for economic development] is the human resource foundation....There's a very strong sense of the importance of education and therefore, to an extent, the notion of the linkage from education to business. But is there a true school-to-work transition component of ASPED? No. Are there champions of that? No."

"The ASPED effort -- one of its greatest failings is its whole linkage to education. We shouldn't be surprised because economic developers don't see the relationship to education any more than educators see the relationship to economic development. So people within their own little bubbles fail to be able to reach out and look at things. So one of the real problems with ASPED/GSPED is that it has not in any meaningful way looked at the human resource integration with [school-to-work] activity....That's an area that needs a lot of work."

Linking School Reform and Economic Development in Rural Areas

For the state as a whole, the omission of school-to-work and workforce preparation issues from school reform and economic development initiatives means that state planners designing a school-to-work system have their work cut out for them -- particularly if there is any hope of accommodating rural Arizona. In terms of school reform, for a majority of rural Arizonans, there is no choice of schools and therefore open enrollment and vouchers are virtually meaningless propositions. Furthermore, when the entire school system is comprised of a single school or two, decentralization is not a burning issue. And while Charter Schools may be a good idea, recruiting and maintaining sufficient staff for existing schools poses enough of a challenge without having to create new ones. The school reform agenda in Arizona clearly reflects urban interests.

As for economic development initiatives in rural Arizona, consultants say that there is little more than lip service paid to rural economic development issues. One exception may be increased activity at the Arizona-Mexico border as a result of the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Kornreich 1993; Kornreich, Waits & Welch 1994). However, at least some interviewees are not overly optimistic about prospects for rural economic growth and development as the following excerpts indicate:

"I'm not particularly hopeful about rural Arizona and rural America because I think it's in deep, deep trouble. Simply put, the economic development issues are *so* daunting that I don't think they can deal with [it]. I don't think there's the resources, the wherewithal, the understanding, the talent to deal with [it]...Rural areas have such limited resources with which to work. They don't have the sort of sugar daddies that the metropolitan areas do; they don't have the political clout; they don't typically have the old money. I mean, all those things make it very difficult to make the transition. So you look in Arizona in the farm towns and things like that and, with certain exceptions, there's essentially no where to go but down."

"If the expectation is some parity with the economic realities of the large urban areas, that's an unrealistic expectation....we want a good quality of life for rural area, but what can we really expect to happen there? ....I can't just go out in the middle of nowhere unless I can be in the middle of nowhere and do it, but most companies are dependent upon an infrastructure and communities have got to recognize that kind of a need on the part of business."

The Rural Dilemma for School-to-Work Transition

As for school-to-work transition efforts in rural areas, more than one person pointed out a fundamental dilemma. Viewing the three components of the Act -- a school-based component, work-based experience, and connecting activities -- one can somewhat envision a school-based component. However, the work-based component poses significant challenges. In many areas, there are simply no job opportunities. In other cases, work opportunities are part-time, low-skill, low-wage, dead-end jobs -- presumably not the type of jobs that foster the development of a "new" workforce (Danzig, 1992; Vandegrift and Danzig, 1993). Moreover, access to support services of all kinds is problematic in rural areas (cf. Sandler, Kornreich & Hall, 1993). Given limited job opportunities and difficulties accessing support services, the question becomes one of whether or not a school-based program can adequately prepare young workers effectively without hands-on exposure in a work environment.

Interviewees and consultants alike have noted a fundamental Catch-22 in rural areas. These areas cannot adequately prepare a workforce without exposing them to work. They

cannot attract work or foster economic development without a prepared workforce. As one interviewee put it:

> "The reality is that we have a Catch-22. Economic development is based upon a skilled workforce. A skilled workforce needs to have a place to get their skills for personal economic gain. [Rural] communities get concerned because their people leave their town to go to where the jobs are. [Rural communities] say: 'Wait! Stay long enough so we can try. So we can say, Look, we have these kinds of talents here!' and attract economic development."

Or, on a more hopeful note:

> "I suppose [we need] kind of a 'Field of Dreams' approach where if you create the skills in the workforce, maybe the jobs will come. I think that has to be an element in our approach. I mean, I think we have to be pragmatic about it, but we can't afford not to be hopeful."

The Realities of Policymaking...Dollars Follow Population

Taking all these comments into consideration, a more important question becomes one of how seriously state policymakers take into account the realities of rural areas. This question was asked of key Arizonans. Some of their responses follow.

> "Do policymakers think about rural areas? The answer is no for a simple reason. I'll take Arizona as an example. If 85 percent of the population is from urban areas, you think rural areas are going to get any concern? In many cases, they get scraps. In everything."

> "I do not see the policies reflecting the special needs of the rural areas....The only thing I can see from the rural side is that I think that some communities, because they are smaller, can pull together and address problems in a very coordinated and effective manner if they have leadership and vision."

These comments indicate the belief that little attention has been paid to rural areas, at least to date. A follow-up question is whether attention *needs* to be redirected to rural areas. Specifically in terms of school-to-work opportunities -- regardless of what these opportunities might look like -- we asked whether a state plan *should* address school-to-work transitions in

rural areas. If the following views are representative of policymakers at large, the future of school-to-work opportunities in rural areas is uncertain.

On one side, there is a sense of obligation to serve even the smallest rural population.

> "I think that it's unacceptable and immoral to turn our backs on [rural] areas. I don't think that's a choice. I understand the force of numbers, but there are other issues and I don't think anybody in a responsible public policy position should take that path [of focusing exclusively on urban areas]."

A more prevalent view is that dollars should follow the population.

> "You're tempted give an answer like 'No, it's not good policy because it tends to condemn rural areas to their fate.' Or, at the very least, 'If X percent of the state is rural, at least give X percent of the concern.' Is it good public policy [to focus on urban areas]? Ultimately, probably, yeah. And the reason it's good public policy is because *no* school-to-work transition is going to stem the brain-drain. There's very little that's going to stem the brain-drain....so the question is, 'Now, do you throw good money after bad in the rural areas?'....All roads lead to the urban areas, so you've got the make them work....so in some senses, it's not bad public policy though it sounds like a dirty thing to say."

> "If you had 90 percent of your people in one program...and 10 percent were in the rest of the programs, where are you going to put your resources? Now, that's just the reality. It's the way it is. And I don't know what you can do about that....[At best] it's going to have to be proportional. You can't afford to run things out there for five percent of the population base...so there's certain economic realities in what you can do."

Why Be Concerned About School-to-Work Opportunities in Rural Arizona?

Why focus attention on rural areas? Harvard/MIT researchers Murnane and Levy (1993) assert "that if education policies are to prepare effectively the labor force of the future, they must address the needs of *all* our youths" (p. 9; emphasis added). On one hand, there is simply the notion of *equal* opportunity as it applies to school programs and policies. Beyond this argument, however, there is something fundamentally disturbing about the omission of rural concerns in state policymaking.

The nature and demographics of rural Arizona reveal a host of economic, educational, and social problems that are linked with poverty and associated with other characteristics such as minority status and limited English proficiency. Our concern is that *if* -- in the words of one interviewee -- focusing on urban issues equates to good Arizona public policy, *then* social equity issues inherent to the rural-urban dichotomy are essentially ignored in the creation of Arizona policy. Thus while the state's public policy may not intentionally promote social *in*equality, it certainly fails to promote social equality and thereby contributes to the perpetuation of a rural underclass. The demographics of Arizona help illustrate this concern.

Arizona is a land of extremes, and the distribution of its populace is no exception. Nearly three-quarters of Arizonans (73 percent) live in roughly 25 percent of the territory -- primarily in two of Arizona's 15 counties in the metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. Conversely, 27 percent of the population are sparsely distributed in the remaining 13 counties. Notably, one-fourth of the state consists of 23 reservations that house more than 200,000 Native American Arizonans.

Although non-residents perhaps best associate rural Arizona with the natural wonder of the Grand Canyon, state residents are increasingly aware of a human element, namely the staggering rise in poverty in rural areas. As a whole, Arizona experienced a 61 percent increase in the number of people living in poverty between 1979 and 1989 compared to a 16 percent increase nationwide (Hall, 1994, p. 3). Much of Arizona's rise in poverty can be traced to the rural areas. Recent reports (Hall, 1994; Sandler, Kornreich & Hall, 1993) indicate that:

- The average household income in rural Arizona is more than 21% lower than the state as a whole;
- Arizona's average poverty rate in rural areas is 23.1 percent compared to 13.5 percent in urban areas and 15.7 percent for the state as a whole;
- Per capita personal income (PCPI) is 35% lower than the national average in Arizona's rural areas after adjusting for living costs, while 14% below the national average for Arizona as a whole.

The number of poor children in rural Arizona is particularly disturbing. Nearly one of every three rural children lives in poverty. A recent report issued by the Government Accounting Office (*Rural Children: Increasing Poverty Rates Pose Educationally Challenges*, 1994) notes that while the number of rural children declined nationwide, the number of *poor* rural children rose during the 1980s. In contrast, *both* the number of rural children and the number of *poor* rural children rose during this timeframe in Arizona. The percentage of Arizona's rural school-age children living in poverty (29.3 percent) is exceeded only by Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico. Furthermore, children in rural Arizona (ages birth to 18) compared to their urban peers:

- are predominantly minority (see Table 1),
- drop out of school more,
- get in trouble with the law,
- have babies at earlier ages, and
- tend to receive late or no prenatal care (Hall, 1994; Kornreich, Sandler & Hall, 1992; Sandler, Kornreich & Hall, 1993).

Table 1. Child Population (birth - 18) by Ethnicity in Arizona's Counties*									
County	Total	White		Hisp.	Nat. Amer.	Afr. Amer.	Other		
			% total					Subtotal	% total
Apache	25664	4015	16%	1126	20443	29	51	21649	84%
Cochise	27568	14697	53%	10422	164	1588	696	12870	47%
Coconino	29909	13594	45%	3378	12337	372	228	16315	55%
Gila	10728	5889	55%	2691	2058	51	38	4838	45%
Graham	8803	4534	52%	2375	1773	86	34	4268	48%
Greenlee	2739	1318	48%	1346	55	8	12	1421	52%
La Paz	3669	1442	39%	1344	821	31	31	2227	61%
Mohave	21126	18452	87%	1731	710	59	173	2673	13%
Navajo	29832	9875	33%	2218	17459	168	112	19957	67%
Pinal	34098	15532	46%	13666	3572	1182	146	18566	54%
Santa Cruz	10205	1256	12%	8853	4	19	73	8949	88%
Yavapai	23185	19928	86%	2455	550	86	165	3256	14%
Yuma	31609	12279	39%	17667	409	843	411	19330	61%
	259136	122811		69272	60355	4522	2170		
		47%		27%	23%	2%	1%		
						136319			
						53%			
Maricopa	555792	372348	67%	136348	11759	24680	10658	183445	33%
Pima	166199	90673	55%	59754	6551	6054	3166	75525	45%
	721990	463019		196102	18310	30734	13824		
	100%	64%		27%	3%	4%	2%		
						258970			
						36%			
* Based on 1990 census data taken from "Kids Count Factbook: Arizona's Children 1992" (Kornreich, Sandler & Hall, 1992).									

Concurrently, reported incidents of child abuse and neglect are higher in Arizona's rural areas than they are in urban areas, and proportionately greater numbers of children and families rely on public assistance programs. Some analysts claim that such social problems arise in no small measure from the declining rural economy which is nationally characterized by slow employment growth, low earnings, and high unemployment -- characteristics certainly borne out in rural Arizona (Kornreich, Sandler & Hall, 1992; Sandler, Kornreich & Hall, 1993).

Glover and Marshall point out that "the lack of a systematic bridge between school and work most adversely affects poor and minority students" (1993, p. 593). In rural Arizona, poor and minority students are disproportionately represented in the population. These students are already at a disadvantage in the labor market (Glover and Marshall, 1993). The slighting of rural Arizona in the school-to-work equation is troubling because those who need the bridge from school to work most -- those already at risk for full participation in the workforce -- have the least access. The social consequences of neglecting rural students should not be underestimated. As one interviewee notes:

> "What happens with these entry-level employees -- high school, you know, the younger student -- is a *major* issue for this state. It's a major issues from the standpoint of dependency and costs related to AFDC and all the other dependency kinds of things. It's an issue clearly when you look at juvenile delinquency and potential for adult crime. The cost implications are incredible of not resolving the problem of this huge population of young people who don't know where they're going. It's got to be a major element in the crime and violence. It's the hopelessness."

Developing A Comprehensive School-to-Work Strategy in Arizona

This exploratory analysis of Arizona's policy context in relation to school-to-work issues points out one area in which we feel considerable attention must be paid in creating a state systemic plan. State policymakers should develop a coherent strategy to address rural issues and the rural-urban dichotomy. Policymakers must come to terms with the fact that ignoring rural issues is tantamount to perpetuating an underclass in the state's rural areas.

School-to-Work Transitions: Connecting Education and Economic Policies

School-to-work transition must address educational reform measures that incorporate economic development and associated changes in the workplace. A unifying vision for a systemic approach to school-to-work transition must go beyond an assumption that schools have failed to adequately prepare students for work. Equal notice must be paid to the notion that workplaces have failed to adequately accommodate students.

There is a considerable body of literature that cites a lack of rewards for students trying to enter the workplace. As Glover and Marshall note, "effort and achievement in school are disconnected from rewards in the workplace, thus undermining student incentives to work hard and achieve in school" (1993, p. 596). Research by Rosenbaum (1990) also argues that effort and achievement in high school are not rewarded for students who do not plan to go to college. Specifically in relation to rural areas, Danzig's work (1992) documents a lack of workplace rewards and incentives for high school graduates and dropouts.

To better connect school and work, policymakers need to address the linkages between education and workforce preparation and economic development. In the words of some of our interviewees:

> "I don't think that you can separate the work, anything dealing with education, and economic development or economic issues. I think that's part of the problem. And, still, 99.99999 percent of the people who are in policy making separate those two issues."

> "What's the point of training people for low-end jobs? Low paying, low-end jobs? They really don't require a lot of training. Why should we invest all this effort into the development of a system that is going to either train people for low paying jobs or train them for higher paying jobs that don't exist? ...you can't talk about [school-to-work] without also talking about business and economic development being integral parts....We have to promote the creation of high performance workplaces and the kinds of jobs that fit in with that concept. I don't have a formula of how to do that, but it's clear to me that it all comes into play as we talk about economic development with the skill development of workers."

> "I have *really* believed that if we don't find a way for school-to-work and economic development to link, there *really* isn't any hope for it....What happens with these entry-level employees, high school, you know, the younger student, is a *major* issue for this state. It's a major issue from the standpoint of dependency and costs related to AFDC...[it's] clearly an issue when you look at juvenile delinquency and potential for adult crime....The cost implications are incredible of not resolving the problem of the huge population of young people who don't know where they're going....We've got to find a way to pull people together and get more vision on this point because, why can not a school-to-work transition be one piece -- and a major element -- of a trained workforce? It seems to me that's the foundation of the whole thing."

Given the absence of school-to-work issues in proposed school reform and their presence in Arizona's Strategic Plan for Economic Development, it seems most logical to begin promoting school-to-work transitions within the realm of economic development. As previously noted, ASPED emphasizes high-tech, high-wage, upwardly mobile jobs in a number of "economic clusters" such as optics and information technology. The vision for economic growth and development presented in Arizona's plan stands in sharp contrast to the apparent realities of rural Arizona. Nevertheless, ASPED promises the kinds of jobs

promoted by school-to-work advocates who view work-based learning within "the larger issue of workforce preparation as an economic development tool." Indeed, ASPED states that the development of "quality human resources" is an essential "foundation" for economic growth, and explicitly includes a goal to improve school-to-work transitions within this context (*Creating a 21st century economy: Arizona strategic plan for economic development*, 1991; Vandegrift, 1992). State policymakers would be wise to link school reform in relation to school-to-work transition with plans for economic development. As one interviewee noted:

> "I would hope that virtually all the programming that emerges at the local level vis-a-vis school-to-work would reflect the clusters as defined by [Arizona's strategic plan]. If they don't, it's a missed opportunity and wasted effort."

Developing School-to-Work Policies and Programs in Rural Arizona

Job opportunities in rural areas are limited in both number and quality. As a result, the brightest students often leave to seek greater educational and employment opportunities that exist in urban areas. Those who stay must cope with limited opportunities. In the short term, school-to-work transition programs in rural areas must address two equally relevant questions: 1) How do you best prepare young people to leave and compete successfully elsewhere? and 2) How do you best help youth who stay? In the long term, the real challenge for rural areas is how to keep its population from leaving in order to build up enough of a trained workforce to attract economic development, or, conversely, to attract economic development in hopes that its population will stay for the employment and training benefits.

In the short term, school-to-work transition programs hold promise for helping rural students explicitly understand the nature of the workplace and for teaching them skills that will help adapt in *any* environment. Although mainly low skill job opportunities are available

in rural areas, rural schools -- like their urban counterparts -- should focus attention on issues such as adolescent development, 21st century work expectations, and specific analytic skills (Borman, 1991; Nightingale and Wolverton, 1993; Wirth, 1993; W.T. Grant Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, 1988). Especially for rural students, these issues are important in helping young people to adapt -- not only to workplaces of the future but also to less demanding worksites.

In the long term, the number and quality of work opportunities in rural areas will depend, at least in part, on the adoption of state and local policies that reinforce and nurture economic growth and development and that foster linkages with school reform. Reforming schools in rural areas *without* focusing equal attention on economic development will only exacerbate the "brain drain" whereby the brightest students leave to seek education and employment in urban areas. On the other hand, establishing high performance workplaces in rural areas without a skilled labor force is imprudent. State policies are needed that proactively help rural areas out of the Catch-22 in which they are currently trapped, i.e., needing a skilled workforce to foster economic growth and needing businesses and industry in order to foster the education and training of a skilled workforce. To fail to create such policies is to accept the fact that rural areas will continue to be plagued by unemployment, poverty, and their social consequences.

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